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# a guide to residential driveway paving



Ministry of  
Consumer and  
Commercial  
Relations  
Ontario



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Residential driveway paving problems are among the most common causes of consumer complaints.

Several people have been taken by unethical companies, while others expected too much from cheap paving jobs. Regardless of the reasons, most conflicts over driveway paving work could be avoided if the consumers involved were better informed about what they are buying.

To help educate the public and put disreputable contractors out of business, representatives from the industry and the consumer ministry have developed this list of paving guidelines for consumers.

The result of extensive consultations between the two groups, this brochure offers practical advice on choosing contractors, explanations of important terms and other information designed to help pave the way to a satisfactory purchase.

## Choosing the contractor

- **Get at least three contractors to quote on the job.** This will involve asking each company to send an estimator out to look over the work required.
- **Don't ask for quotes in winter,** unless you're prepared to clear all the snow off the driveway. It's impossible to determine the cost for paving a driveway that can't be seen.
- **Get all quotes in writing** and be sure they are based on the same specifications. A figure scribbled on the back of a business card is useless.
- **The amounts of materials to be used, work required and square footage of the area involved** should be included in the estimate, along with the price.
- **Point out what types of vehicles will be parked on the driveway** as this may affect the job and, therefore, the price.
- **Don't choose a contractor based on price alone.** Ask for references from past customers and be wary of estimates that are much lower than those given by competitors. Companies offering cheap paving jobs have been known to disappear with customers' downpayments. Low prices can also mean the company plans to skim on materials. Paying a bit more now could save you years of aggravation and expense.

Contractors who have built solid reputations are normally busy on jobs obtained through referrals. They don't generally solicit business door-to-door or through flyers.



**Be cautious about hiring a contractor** with no local office. A company based in a distant town is unlikely to return to do warranty work. If given a local phone number, find out if it is for an actual business office or simply the area sales representative's home.

**Ask for the company's registration number** and confirm it by calling the nearest Consumer Services Bureau of MCCR once a contractor has been chosen. (Phone numbers are listed at the end of this brochure). Paving companies that sign contracts in consumers' homes must be registered under the Consumer Protection Act.

## Setting up the contract

**The contract must include:**

- **the seller's name and address**, along with your own;
- **complete details about the job must be listed**, including the type of work to be done — regrading, excavating, or resurfacing;
- **the depths and qualities of materials to be supplied**. Driveway dimensions should be described and dates for start up and completion of the job should also be established in the contract;

Keep deposits small, if you must give one at all — \$10 to \$50 is sufficient.

## Types of paving jobs

**Resurfacing** involves laying additional asphalt on the existing driveway.

The contract must stipulate that enough new asphalt will be laid to give a "compacted depth" of one and a half inches (1 1/2" or 4 cm). Homeowners should note that resurfacing should only be done if the existing driveway is free of visible defects, including drainage problems.

Before the new asphalt is laid, the old surface must be swept clean and treated with SS1 emulsified asphalt bonding agent.

Remember that resurfacing adds one and a half inches to the driveway. Will you still be able to open the garage door easily once the new asphalt is laid? Could the higher surface cause water to drain onto the lawn or create problems at a side door or basement windows?

**Regrading** may be necessary if the top surface of asphalt has cracked or heaved. Driveways may also need regrading to correct drainage problems.

This process, which does not usually change the height of the driveway, involves the removal of exist-

ing asphalt, regrading of the stone base and resurfacing. Once the asphalt surface has been stripped, the contractor should ensure you have a minimum of six inches (6" or 15 cm) of crushed stone for the base.

Contracts for regrading should state that, if necessary, stone will be added to the existing base to give a total depth of six inches (6" or 15 cm) after compaction. The asphalt layer should be two inches (2" or 5 cm) deep after compaction. A driveway with severe drainage problems may require a deeper base. Be sure all depths are stipulated in the contract.

**Excavation** is the most costly driveway treatment, involving the removal of all existing materials, regrading of the underlying earth and replacement of the base and asphalt.

Excavation is indicated if the base appears to be caving in, the original grading was done incorrectly, the materials used were of poor quality or the driveway is too high. Base stone and asphalt depths should be the same as those listed for regrading work.

## Materials

**Base stone** is generally "grade A" gravel or crushed limestone, as these aggregates offer the best compaction and drainage qualities. Your contract should stipulate what type of stone will be used. Remember, the base should be at least six inches deep after compaction.

**Asphalt** for residential driveways is generally available in two grades. A mix called "HL3" is the grade recommended by the industry. The other type — "HL3A" — provides a smoother, more attractive finish, but is not as durable as HL3.

The contract should state the grade to be used and, most importantly, that it will be laid in "sufficient quantity to give a compacted depth of two inches" ("one and a half inches" for a resurfacing job only). This clause is vital as unethical contractors often mislead consumers about quantities by listing depths before compaction.

In general, a six inch base, topped with two inches of asphalt meets most needs. Don't ask for a deeper asphalt layer with a shallower base, hoping to improve the quality of your driveway. Think of the base as a cake and the asphalt as icing. If the cake falls, all the icing in the world won't help.

It's interesting to note that 30 to 40 tons (31 to 41 tonnes) of gravel are needed to install a residential driveway of approximately 1,000 square feet (93 square metres). About 12 tons (tonnes) of asphalt would be required for the finishing layer.

## **Specifics about:**

### **New homes**

The industry strongly advises new home owners not to have their driveways paved for at least two years following construction of the house, allowing the ground to settle.

In most new subdivisions, the house builder arranges to pave the boulevards — the area between the sidewalk and the road. Ask the builder or your municipal planning department who is responsible for the boulevard, before signing a driveway paving contract.

### **Weeds**

Soil sterilants to stop the growth of weeds in a new driveway are not usually applied automatically. If you wish to have your driveway treated, be sure to list this requirement in your contract. The process usually costs \$25 to \$50.

Soil sterilants kill most vegetation. Be sure the chemical is applied carefully, on a calm day, to avoid damage to nearby plants.

### **Driveway edges**

The weight of a car can cause the edges of a driveway to deteriorate gradually. If the wheels of your car generally stand near the driveway edge, it is advisable to have curb stones or wood installed for support. Again, these extras and their prices must be listed in the contract. Some homeowners prefer to put the supports in themselves, instead of paying the contractor for the work.

### **Bumpy finishes**

Reputable contractors use two different rollers to compact and smooth new driveways. A two ton (tonne) roller should be used to compact the base stone and again to compact the asphalt. The final smoothing should be done with a one ton (tonne) roller. When only one roller is used, the driveway may be improperly compacted, although a bumpy finish is the most common result.

### **Prices**

Paving costs will vary with the work required, the location and the individual company involved. However, industry members have come up with a few guidelines which may help when choosing a contractor. Keep in mind that these are broad guidelines and prices will vary.

In Metro Toronto, the 1986 rate for regrading a driveway of approximately 800 square feet or more is about 90 cents per square foot (\$9.50 per square



metre).

Complete excavation jobs cost about \$2.20 per square foot (\$23.50 per square metre). Remember, this price includes excavation, grading, installation of a new six inch (6" or 15 cm) stone base and two inches (2" or 5 cm) of compacted asphalt.

### **Warranties**

A properly paved driveway should last at least 10 years. Most good contractors offer a one-year warranty on their work.

Don't choose a contractor based solely on the offer of a longer term warranty. Most defects show up during the first 12 months, so a one year-warranty is sufficient.

Remember, warranties are only good for as long as the company stays in business.

Driveway warranties normally cover cracks in asphalt, subsidence and drainage problems caused by faulty workmanship or materials. Contractors cannot be held responsible for damage caused by such things as tree roots, oil or gas spillage, high heels, ladders, lawn chairs, or bicycle kick stands.

Stay off the driveway to allow the new asphalt to cool for the period of time stipulated by the paver. The entire layer of asphalt generally needs about seven days to cool thoroughly.

To avoid marking the surface, be careful not to turn the car wheels while the car is stationary on the driveway during hot weather.

### **In the event of a problem...**

Under the Consumer Protection Act, you can cancel most contracts for more than \$50 if they were signed in your home. Simply send a registered letter or hand deliver it to the company within two clear working days of the signing date.

Consumers who feel they have been unfairly or dishonestly treated by a contractor should contact one of the Consumer Services Bureaus listed below:

## **Consumer Services Bureaus**

### **Toronto**

555 Yonge St.,  
Toronto, Ontario  
M7A 2H6  
(416) 963-0321

### **London**

P.O. Box 5600,  
Postal Station "A",  
Main Floor  
80 Dundas St.,  
London, Ontario  
N6A 2P3  
(519) 679-7150

### **Peterborough**

139 George St. N.,  
Peterborough, Ontario  
K9J 3G6  
(705) 743-8782

### **Thunder Bay**

P.O. Box 5000,  
1st. Floor,  
435 James St. S.,  
Thunder Bay, Ontario  
P7C 5G6  
(807) 475-1641

### **Hamilton**

P.O. Box 2112,  
5th Floor,  
Ont. Govt. Building,  
119 King St. W.,  
Hamilton, Ontario  
L8N 3Z9  
(416) 521-7554

### **Ottawa**

2nd Floor,  
10 Rideau St.,  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1N 9J1  
(613) 566-3878

### **Sudbury**

5th Floor,  
199 Larch St.,  
Sudbury, Ontario  
P3E 5P9  
(705) 675-4378

### **Windsor**

Suite 627  
250 Windsor Ave.,  
Windsor, Ontario  
N9A 6V9  
(519) 254-6413



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